

# Bittersweet nightshade

## *Solanum dulcamara*

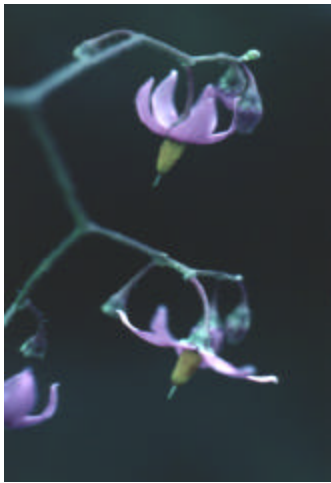
### Control and General Information

#### What is wrong with Bittersweet nightshade?

All parts of the plant are toxic to people, pigs, horses, sheep and pets. There have been reported cases of livestock poisoning in the United States and Europe. The berries may have been responsible for the poisoning of children on Long Island, NY. The plant contains solanine, a toxin which in mild cases has been known to cause symptoms of abdominal pain, headache, flushing, restlessness, irritation of the skin and mucous membranes and tiredness. Severe cases of poisoning also include symptoms of vomiting, thirst, difficulty breathing, subnormal temperature, paralysis, dilated pupils, diarrhea, convulsions, blood in urine, shock, extreme weakness, loss of sensation and occasionally, even death.

#### Where is it found locally?

Bittersweet nightshade is often found growing among non-native blackberries in parks and along un-maintained roadsides. It often appears in gardens as a weed, but is frequently grown as an ornamental plant in people's gardens.



#### How do I identify it?

Bittersweet nightshade is a perennial vine. It is slender with simple leaves that are basally lobed. The flowers range in color from blue to deep purple, with yellow stamens, and resemble the flowers of potato plants. They bloom through out the summer. Berries are oval, green to dark green, and hard when first formed. As they ripen they become bright red, shiny, soft to the touch and translucent. Plants reproduce primarily by seed.

#### How do I control it?

##### Manual Control:

Small infestations can be manually pulled, dug out or cut back. The plants will re-sprout from roots and root fragments but repeated pulling could eventually give good control. **Pieces of the cut vines may resprout if left lying on the soil**, take care to remove all or as much of the plant fragments as possible from the site. Mowing may work as a control, but would likely have to be repeated several times during each growing season.

##### Chemical Control:

For large infestations where manual control may be impractical, chemical treatment may be the most cost-effective way to control bittersweet nightshade. Although data are lacking in the Pacific Northwest, the Pacific Northwest Weed Control Handbook references glyphosate as an effective herbicide for another species of nightshade. Glyphosate is the active herbicide ingredient found in Round-up®. Round-up is a non-selective herbicide and will impact all kinds of vegetation, take care to target only the unwanted weeds with a spot spray or wipe-on application. The *application must be done while the plants are actively growing*. Apply the herbicide evenly to all the green leaf surfaces so that they are thoroughly wet but not dripping. Round-up will injure any plants that it contacts so make sure not to drip herbicide onto any desirable plants including grasses and shrubs. Rain will reduce the effectiveness of the herbicide so you will need a dry day or at least 6 hours without rain. After applying the herbicide, do not cut the plants down until they have died. This can take two weeks or more with Round-up. Cold temperature also slows down the process so it may take more than two weeks to see results. In areas where desired grasses are growing, a broad leaf selective herbicide such as Weed-B-Gon® may be a better choice. In either case, **always read and follow the label instructions**.



If you have any further questions, contact the King County Noxious Weed Control program at the phone number below.



### King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
Water and Land Resources Division  
**Noxious Weed Control Program**  
206-296-0290 TTY Relay: 711